The Death Valley '49ers

47

The Remarkable Life of 1849 Death Valley Pioneer

JOHN B. Colton

by Marvin Jensen

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Of

1849 Death Valley Pioneer

John B. Colton

Courtesy FCIT

By

Marvin Jensen

Edited by
Judy Bedell and Jean Pickard

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Introduction

The 1848 gold discovery in California, publicized by President Polk in his State of the Union Address, December 5, 1848, created what proved to be an extremely contagious gold fever in the Eastern United States. With exaggerated tales of gold in the streams and rivers of California just waiting to be scooped up, many hopeful prospectors headed west. Young John Colton, who had just turned 17 and was living with his parents in Galesburg, Illinois, caught that fever. He told his parents he would like to go to California in search of gold, that he would purchase his own wagon, and would ask some friends to join him. His parents agreed. Little did anyone know what adventures awaited this young man, his friends, and numerous others.

During his life time, he became friends with and an acquaintance of many of the famous people of that era including: mountain man James Bridger, frontiersmen Kit Carson and Buffalo Bill Cody, explorer Captain John C. Fremont, Alexander Majors (founder of the Pony Express), General Grenville Dodge (Civil War general and chief engineer for the construction of Union Pacific's westward expansion), and Presidents Ulysses Grant and Theodore Roosevelt.

John Burton Colton lived life to the fullest and his trek through Death Valley was just the beginning of a true tale of success, adventure, and many friendships. This keepsake chronicles Colton's life and his travels west through Death Valley and beyond.

John B. Colton
The Early Years

In the summer of 1831, Chauncey and Emily Colton of Monson, Maine welcomed a new addition to the family. John B. Colton was born August 11th as the third of five children. He was preceded by Harriet and Sarah and was followed by Francis and one child lost in infancy.

In 1836, when John Colton was five years old, the family headed west during the western expansion of the United States. They decided to settle in the area that later became Galesburg, Knox County Illinois. John's enterprising father was the first merchant in the new town. He built the first store for his mercantile business and built a log cabin for his family. It was not an easy life. At first there were only a few hundred residents in the area and they prided themselves on being adventurous and industrious.

As a young boy, John always enjoyed adventure and could often be found exploring in the woods near his home. He would lie in the high grass by the creek with his bow and arrow ready to shoot any deer or wolf that came across the prairie sunset.

Courtesy FCIT

Chauncey Colton knew the importance of a good education and work ethic. To earn a little money John worked in his father's store. He attended the common schools and a local Galesburg academy and spent a short time at the University of Pennsylvania. His education was complete at age 17 and it was then that the word of gold in California caught his attention and his life began to change.

Don't Go To California

Not everyone was caught up in the rush to California in search of gold. The following article was reprinted in numerous newspapers including one in Monmouth, Illinois; a city in Warren County near Galesburg. The article appeared on February 16, 1849, shortly before John Colton and his friends left Galesburg, and included a warning they did not heed.

"Of the thousands who go we believe, and have had some experience in proving, not one in twenty will be alive in twelve months. Exposure to all sorts of weather, unwholesome food, change of life, disease, long marches, excitements, private and general broils and battles, but more than all that, the scourge of unsheltered and badly fed masses, diarrhea and dysentery, will make a havoc among the multitudinous and heterogeneous gatherings in California, such as the world has never before known, not even in the 'death harvests' of the Crusades.

That there is gold in California is well settled; but the provident and industrious man who stays at home and minds his business will not only be richer two years hence, but he will have preserved a mind of health and happiness, which the most lucky gold hunter will sacrifice beyond a chance. Stay at home till the extremity of the fever is past and reason resumes its throne."

Detroit Advertiser, Michigan

Courtesy Tuolumne County Museum

On To California
The Jayhawkers And the Death Valley Wagon Train

John Colton 1849, before Leaving for California.

© Huntington Library

Although news of the dangers of going west had reached Galesburg, Illinois; many gold seekers set forth without heeding the warning. John Colton was among them. On April 1, 1849, people flocked to the streets to bid farewell and safe journey as Colton and 35 other men from the Galesburg area left in 12 wagons bound for California. Colton and his friends, John Cole and Sidney Edgerton, were in the first wagon. Although the group was led by Captain Edward Doty, a farmer from Knox County, Colton is credited with being the organizer of the wagon train.

The wagon train headed west, crossing the Mississippi River without incident, then continued to the Missouri River at Kanesville, Iowa (known today as Council Bluffs). Here they found many other wagons waiting to cross the Missouri; therefore, the group from Knox County decided to build their own raft of logs. This raft, which could only carry one wagon at a time, was propelled with two men on each of two oars. The livestock swam across the river. After crossing the Missouri they followed along the north side of the Platte River through Nebraska.

Although travel was much slower than anticipated, things had gone fairly well. In the evenings, they entertained themselves around a campfire with music and singing. For the most part, they were a very happy group.

During one camp along the Platte River, wagon mate John Cole splashed soapsuds on Edward Doty's head and laughingly told him: "I'm going to make a Jayhawker out of you!"

At a later date, Colton recorded that the word, "Jayhawker," was coined based on the predatory habits of jaybirds and hawks along the river. This was the first recorded use of the word.

Because of Cole's antics, the entire group decided to become Jayhawkers. However, before doing so, they decided to have an initiation to prove one's worthiness.

The group decided there needed to be a code of conduct to live by and an agreement to stand by each other under all circumstances. They would defend the group until the last drop of blood should be spilled.

When initiated, a candidate was taken bodily on the shoulders of four stout men and carried around the campfire. As the circuit was made, a song was sung while wagon train member Mr. Isham played his violin. When a halt was called, one of the candidate's pant legs was raised and a good-sized bit of hair was pulled out from his shin. Next, the Captain of the Order asked the candidate if he would:

"Solemnly promise to stand by his comrades through peace and war; when danger was in camp, and under all circumstances. Remember this is your solemn oath; do you agree? What is your reply? I do and will obey." This became known as the Jayhawker Oath.

The ceremony was then continued until the second revolution was made and when stopped the candidate had to submit to the same painful ordeal on his leg. If he did not squeal, the others welcomed him with boisterous shouts and laughter. Hence, Colton and his friends, as well as men who had joined the wagon train along the way, became known as Jayhawkers.

The usual hardships were constantly encountered such as broken wagon axles and yokes, lack of water, and the daily chore of finding sufficient feed for the animals.

Along the route, Colton wrote articles and sent them to the newspaper in Monmouth, Illinois. The following excerpts from the *Monmouth News* are good examples of his writing. Each section covers a few days in the life of Colton and his wagon train, and the dates indicate when the article was published.

July 17, 1849: *We have been following the north bank of the river (Platte), so that water was handy; but we have traveled five hundred miles without any rain and the sand is hot as an oven. We comfort ourselves however, with the idea that we shall see no rain for the 500 miles to come.*

At last we came in sight of the Sweetwater River, which was a welcome sight to our cattle and us. We first touched the river at the great "Independence Rock." We should have been here on the fourth of July. This is a curiosity. I should think there were half a million names on it at least, put on with all kinds of paint and brushes. I got mine on with tar and a rag.

July 18, 1849: *We traveled eight miles and stopped at noon near some springs on the top of a hill. Some of the company took their oxen off their wagons others left them on. It was very warm and we were lying under our wagons when all of a sudden the cattle started. Those hitched to the wagon rushed upon each other, running over everything. Our oxen were off the wagon and hitched together. I was lying under the forward axletree when the wheel from another wagon struck ours and broke the axle. One yoke of our oxen got caught under that wagon and were dragged about 200 feet on their backs before we could get them loose and then they were nearly dead. I don't think we can use them again. Another train passed by and I bought an axle for $1.00 and hired a Wagoner of the same train to put it on.*

July 24, 1849: *We are lying at the Pacific Springs in the South Pass (Wyoming). We have traveled only eight miles today on account of having to go without food or water during the next 24 hours. We have separated ourselves today from the eastern side of North America, nearly 8000 feet above the level of the sea. We reached the summit at noon. We could see the Sweetwater running one way and Pacific Creek the other; after this, all the streams run into a great basin called the St. Mary's sink and then disappear. We have had no more stampedes and I think we will have none. Our teams look well.*

The slow pace of the wagon train gave Colton and the Jayhawkers concern. They feared they may not reach Salt Lake City in time to continue westward if they followed the same route as the earlier, tragic Donner Party.

Regardless, the Jayhawkers continued on to Fort Bridger, where they rested a few days. It was here that Colton met frontiersman James Bridger. Within in a short amount of time, Colton, who just turned 18, developed a strong relationship with the 45 year old Bridger. Colton made Bridger promise to meet him in Salt Lake City. That promise was kept and that story is discussed later, herein.

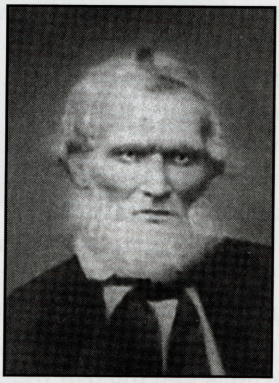
It was September when the Jayhawkers arrived at Salt Lake City, Utah. They were informed it was indeed too late to continue westward and that they should wait until the next spring. Hundreds of other pioneers were also given the same advice.

By October, the restless Jayhawkers and others formed a wagon train known as the Sand Walking Company. At a later date, this company will be coined the infamous Death Valley Wagon Train. Capt. Jefferson Hunt, a Mormon and personal friend of Brigham Young, was hired to guide the wagon train at $10.00 per wagon. He recommended using a southern route towards Los Angeles. Hunt, and other Mormons,

had used this route when returning from the Mexican-American war. Hunt's party had traveled along part of the Old Spanish Trail and had been the first to get a wagon from Los Angeles to Salt Lake City.

Although Capt. Hunt was the guide of the entire wagon train, Capt. Doty continued as the leader of the Jayhawkers.

Things went well until a bogus map, with a supposed shortcut to California and the gold fields, was shown to the wagon train leaders by Captain Wesley "O. K." Smith.



Capt. Jefferson Hunt
©California State Library

Capt. Edward Doty
©Huntington Library

Capt. Hunt warned them *"if they took the supposed short cut into the uncharted area they would all wind up in hell."* He was not aware of how accurate his prediction would be. Part of the wagon train would cross a portion of the Great American Desert and end up in an area which later would become known as Death Valley.

Not all of the wagons followed Mr. Smith's advice. Two of the Jayhawker wagons and others followed Capt. Hunt and arrived in Los Angeles nearly two months ahead of the rest of the group. Colton, the remaining Jayhawkers, and many others, all anxious to get to California, followed the map with the alleged shortcut.

William Lewis Manley, a prominent member of that wagon train and author of the book Death Valley in '49, wrote:

> *"For those that did take the cutoff the peaceful nights, pleasant days and joyous evenings soon changed to destitution, sickness and starvation. Their wagons were left or burned on the deserts, their cattle eaten and several starved to death or from lack of water. Mr. Isham, our violinist who beguiled us with his fine music was buried on the desert. So far as is known, each Jayhawker maintained his integrity, and*

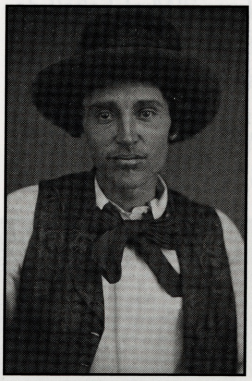
the Oath taken at the beginning of the journey was sacredly observed."

Colton and the Jayhawkers found themselves in dire straits. They celebrated Christmas 1849 on the floor of Death Valley not knowing what their fate might be. The wagon train again split up into several different factions. There are stories concerning a companion saving the life of another by sharing a last cup of water or the last biscuit. On occasion a group member would lie down in the desert and go no further. True to the Jayhawker oath, the other group members provided the encouragement to carry on. At one point, when Colton was weak and very ill, he too had lain down. Luckily a companion, Tom Shannon, shared his water and made him continue. Colton and the Jayhawkers remained bonded together, loyal to the Jayhawker Oath and pledge they had made to each other. Not knowing their exact location or the route out of their current circumstance, the Jayhawkers began to send scouts out in search of water and an escape.

On February 4, 1850, John Colton and fellow Jayhawker Tom Shannon saw a red tile roof in the distance. Shannon, who served in the Mexican War, recognized what appeared to be a Mexican hacienda. Soon, Colton and Shannon came upon some vaqueros. At first the vaqueros were frightened by the sight of Colton and Shannon because they looked like walking skeletons. Colton, who began the trip weighing nearly 170 pounds, now weighed approximately 90.

Colton and Shannon met the rancho manager, Jose Salazar, and were told they were at the Rancho San Francisquito, which was located near present-day Newhall, California. Soon the other Jayhawkers straggled into the rancho and they were all taken care of and fed for several days to regain their health and strength. The group then gave thanks and bid their goodbyes.

Colton Goes To The Gold Mines



John Colton-Miner
©Huntington Library

After leaving Rancho San Francisquito, the Jayhawkers headed to Ventura and thence along the coast to Santa Barbara where they disbanded. Some headed off individually while others continued together in small groups. Colton was one of those who struck out on his own and headed for Los Angeles. There he met some Mexican miners who provided him with a horse, clothes, and food. He accompanied them to Northern California and started panning for gold. Not much is known about this time in his life because he wrote very little about his mining experiences.

From letters written to his father, it is known that he was in San Francisco several times and that he had his picture taken there. Those pictures have appeared in several books and are on file at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California as part of the Jayhawker Collection.

It was in mid-1850 that Colton started mining in the Sonora, Tuolumne County, California and Mormon Gulch area. This gulch, now a ghost town, was founded by Mormon settlers and was also known as Mormon Camp and Tuttletown.

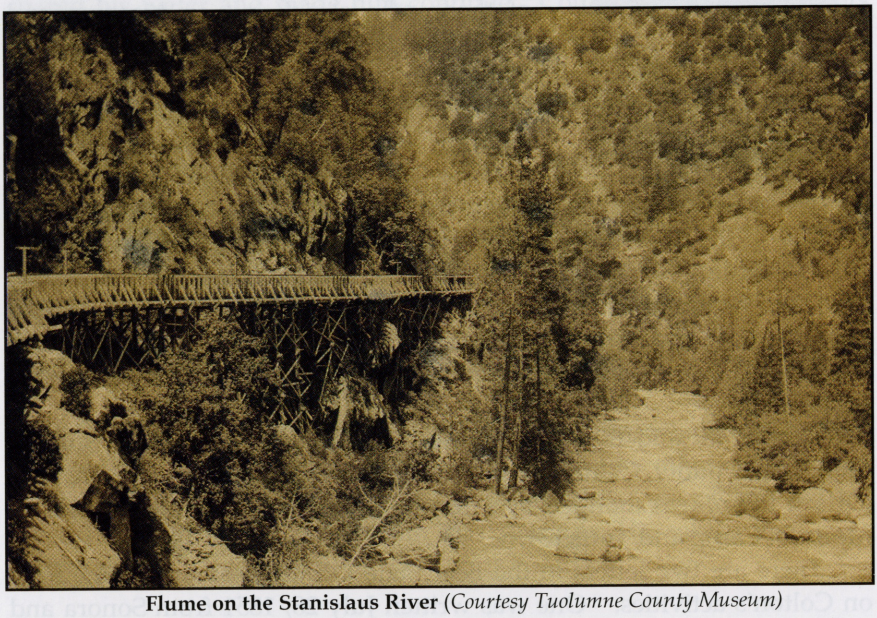
There are two letters in the Bear State Library that shed some light on Colton's activities. One was written July 28, 1851 from Sonora and the other September 11, 1851 from San Francisco. From the two letters his writing indicates that he was involved with the construction and operation of a sawmill, the construction of a flume, sale of water, and some aspect of mining.

On July 28 he wrote to his father: *"We are going to turn the river Stanislaus into the dry digging. We have worked 75 days/162 men and have made a grade six feet wide, six and a half miles long. Two and a half more miles will finish which we will do this week. After finishing the grading we have to flume it. We found it impossible to dig a ditch that will hold water. We will begin the sawmill tomorrow with 3 saws and 25 whip saws to saw by hand." There is plenty of good fine timber.*

It is it mighty hard work.

"Shares are selling from two to four hundred dollars. This is the best profit I know of. All have their mind to make $5,000.00 per annum for the use of water. I am clear of one thing that I can sell out and with what I have in the mine and have $5,000.00 next June. What I shall do, sell or stay I do not know. I do know it will bring in a mighty salary to a person living in the States and will be something that will last a good many years.

The least that will be clear is for the use of water will be five to six dollars a ton per day and we can furnish enough to mine 10,000 tons."



Flume on the Stanislaus River (*Courtesy Tuolumne County Museum)*

"I wish you would write often and let me know how things are getting along. The boys (Jayhawkers) as far as I know are all well gambling and drinking going on as usual. Give my respects to all hands. Tell mother to write and tell the young one (his brother Francis) not to grow too fast or I shall not know him. Send me a paper once in awhile."

On September 11 1851, shortly after turning twenty one, he wrote to his father: *"I have not much to write but thought it would not do for me to go home (Sonora) and me not write anything. I am in good health. I am here now to find a small steamboat up to Stockton for the*

purpose of getting the engine for our sawmill. I have spent some money and some time I expect a great deal more. Some have sold out for little or nothing. I am going to stick with it until the last trump is played for I am clear of one thing it cannot fail to pay me my commission wages of labor one hundred or one hundred twenty five dollars per month for all the time I spent with the chance of considerable more. If I do well in the mines this winter and I can sell in the spring or summer I shall come home. The boys are all scattered about the mines. I don't think they are doing much. If I could only have had water last winter and summer I should have made my pile but it wasn't so (There was a severe drought in 1851). *Sid* (Edgerton, his 1849 wagon mate) *is somewhere in the northern mines. The last time I heard from him he was trying to pay his debts, he has borrowed some one hundred fifty or two hundred dollars. I suppose if I were in his place I would go home and send out his young one for he has got more sense and judgment than he has. If the water could come by now everybody would have one ounce per day. I wish you would send me a Galesburg paper once in awhile so I can see what is going on."*

At one point while mining at Mormon Gulch, Colton heard voices and upon investigating found that one of them was that of Capt. Hunt, their 1849 wagon train guide.

"Stop right where you are," said Colton approaching the astonished Capt. Hunt, *"Didn't you tell me some months ago I was going straight to hell?"*

Hunt could scarcely believe his eyes. He was sure Colton's group had not survived the shortcut. While rumors had circulated that the Jayhawkers had come through, Capt. Hunt still believed the entire group had perished in the desert. Colton remained in the Sonora area until sometime in 1852 when he headed home to Galesburg with considerable money.

The following daguerreotype was taken of John Colton in 1850 on Long Wharf, San Francisco. Later the photographer began selling the picture as "a girl miner in boy's clothing". His story was that she crossed the plains in '49 with her parents who both died. Thereafter, a woman in the train took charge of her and got her safely through to the mines where she found a rich Placer Mine and soon made her "pile." On her way home and still dressed in men's mining attire, she stopped in San Francisco where she had this picture taken.
The photographer sold hundreds of the pictures at five dollars each. Later in San Francisco, John Colton came upon the photographer and exposed his fraud but let him continue to sell the picture.

Courtesy Huntington Library

Return to Galesburg

After returning to Galesburg, Colton worked for many years in his father's successful mercantile store. It was called the "C. S. Colton Store" and specialized in general mercantile. In the 15 years since the Colton's settled in Galesburg, Chauncey Colton's mercantile had grown from its humble beginnings as a small log store, to a thriving business. After John and his brother Francis joined the business, it became known as "C.S. Colton & Sons".

On March 30, 1857 John married Elizabeth McClure and they had two children, Chauncey and Elizabeth. Unfortunately, his wife and two children died in the early 1860's. Although the causes of death are unknown, epidemics of influenza, smallpox and cholera were prevalent during this period. Elizabeth was only 22 years old when she died in 1861. This must have had a devastating affect on John because not long after her death he joined the Union Army. In later years, he spoke very little about his first marriage. In most articles and books, only his second wife is usually mentioned. It is almost certain that the strong character he developed from his father carried him through this difficult period in his life.

The Colton Home on Broad Street, Galesburg, Illinois. Although Colton lived in Kansas City for many years, his family lived here and Colton considered Galesburg his true home (*Photo by Marvin Jensen).*

Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad

In the early 1850's, the expansion of railroads were important to the growth of the West. If a city or town did not have a railroad going through it, the community would not experience the economic growth that was common in "railroad towns".

Such was the case with Galesburg and Knoxville (a community five miles to the south and the seat of Knox County). A railroad was planned to go through Knoxville, which did not sit well with the businessmen of Galesburg. Colton's father organized some local businessmen, traveled to the east coast, and influenced the railroad men that the best place for a railroad was Galesburg, not Knoxville. Money was invested and tracts of land were obtained to establish rights-of-way.

The men from Galesburg convinced others that the best route between the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers to Chicago was between Quincy, Illinois and Galesburg.

The Galesburg C. B. & Q. Railroad station decorated with flags, ribbons and bunting for the visit of President McKinley in 1899 *(Courtesy Galesburg City Library).*

After a number of years, the merger of several railroad lines, and the efforts of Chauncey Colton; the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad (C. B. & Q.) was born. Chauncey immediately became a member of the Board of Directors of the new railroad. Galesburg became such an important railroad city that the county seat was moved to Galesburg from Knoxville in 1873. Today, Galesburg boasts one of the largest railroad yards in the United States. Consequently, Knoxville remains a small community to this day.

John Colton also invested heavily in the C. B. & Q, and like his father, became a member on the first board of directors. He served for over thirty years as a member of the board of directors and as chairman of the board at the annual meetings in Chicago and elsewhere, until his passing in 1919. Both John and his father encouraged the C. B. & Q. to expand westward across the Mississippi into Iowa and farther west. They were both very proud of the rapid growth of C. B. & Q. and its importance in the railroad industry. In later years, Colton also acquired a financial interest in the Union Pacific Railroad.

Civil War
83rd Illinois Infantry

Captain John B. Colton
©Huntington Library

In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln called for the enlistment of one million men for military service. Colonel A. C. Harding, of Monmouth, was told to raise a regiment to be named the 83rd Illinois Infantry. Colonel Harding knew John Colton. Because of John's success in the mercantile business and his knowledge of procurement, Harding asked Colton to be the regimental quartermaster. Consequently, John accepted and became involved with the organization of the regiment even before it was officially mustered.

On August 1862, the 83rd Illinois Infantry regiment was mustered into service. It was comprised of men from Knox and several neighboring counties. Colton was mustered in with the rank of captain, although the commission did not become official until approved by President Lincoln on November 26, 1862.

Obtaining equipment for the soldiers was a difficult assignment. Most regiments were ill-equipped and did not have the proper rifles. He made a trip to Chicago to meet the colonel in charge of equipment. Colton, being strong-willed and determined, told him (as recorded in an article that appeared in the Galesburg, Republican-Register on October 7, 1915):

"Together with General Harding I am helping organize a regiment at Monmouth, and we are going to have the best regiment in the state. I want a full line of equipment for that regiment and you give it to me without any trouble."

Realizing the determination of Colton and that he was not a person to take lightly, the colonel replied, *"I will have the whole order sent to Monmouth."* In a few weeks, the requested supplies arrived. Upon examining the rifles, he found there were only a few Springfields, with the remainder being Dutch shotguns with a knife at the end. Colton wanted only the Springfields. He went immediately to Governor Yates because he knew the munitions were kept in Springfield, Illinois. Again with strong will and great determination he told the Governor:

"Give me an order for one thousand Springfield rifles. I told him the impression that such action would make in our part of the state would bind our people to the governor and help him with his senatorial aspirations."

The governor had Colton's wagons back up to the door of the munitions building and loaded with one thousand rifles and other equipment Colton had requested.

In September of 1862, the regiment was assigned to Fort Donelson, Tennessee. In December, Colton was assigned to General Grant's staff to be the assistant quartermaster of the United States Army. He was to report to Milliken Bend, Louisiana, which was described as little more than a "malaria quagmire".

On January 1, 1863, before Colton departed the 83rd Regiment, he was the recipient of a testimonial from the men of the 83rd, which follows:

RESOLVED: That whereas our regimental quartermaster John B. Colton, having been promoted to be the assistant quartermaster of the United States army, which will take him from us and the regimen.

RESOLVED, That we tender to Captain Colton our earnest and heartfelt thanks for the prompt, thorough and faithful manner in which he has conducted his department and in supplying our wants, giving the regiment officers and privates entire satisfaction; and that he has done more for us than we could have asked; that although we feel proud of the appreciation of his worth by the government, we regret to part with him and particularly as he is the first one to leave our genial, brotherly circle; but our best wishes go with him and we hope his good business qualifications and generous heart will find him as many true friends as he leaves on the sacred blood stained soil of Fort Donelson, which will always be holy ground to every true Illinoisans.

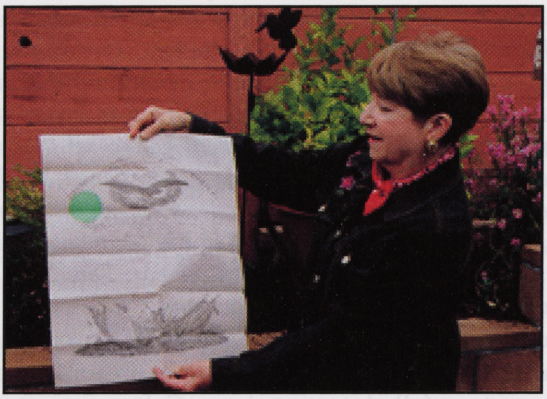
The officers of the 83rd Regiment signed the proclamation. During his time with the 83rd, Colton was able to obtain for his regiment what other quartermasters failed to acquire. Colton reported to General Grant's staff and carried out his duties in the same exemplary manner in which he served the 83rd. Unfortunately, Colton became extremely ill and was obliged to return home before the surrender of Vicksburg, on July 4, 1863. The chief surgeon directed him not to come back to Milliken Bend.

After recovering, Colton was assigned to Helena, Arkansas and had charge of the quartermaster stores. On July 4th, 1863, he was in charge of seeing that four thousand captured Confederate soldiers were loaded on shipboard, sent to Memphis, Tennessee, and north to one of the prison camps. Soon after this, Colton was stricken again with the same illness that troubled him at Milliken Bend. Doctor's orders stated that it was positively necessary for him to return home in order to save his life. Captain Colton's resignation was accepted on October 16, 1863.

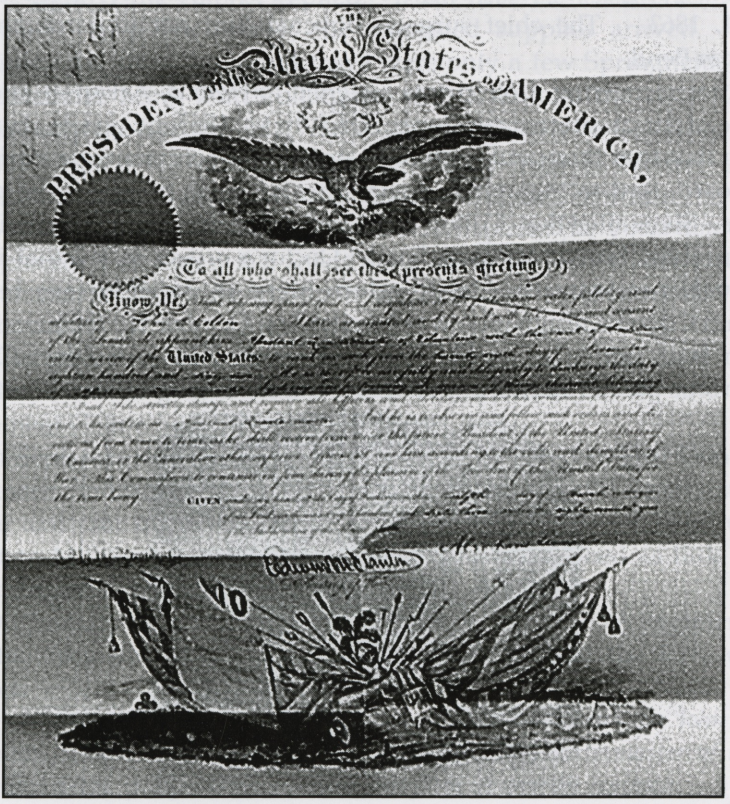
In later years, he was known and referred to as Colonel Colton, which was possibly a title of honor rather than that of rank.

Surrender of Vicksburg July 4th,1863 *Courtesy FCIT*

John Colton's Civil War Commission



Rita Colton, the great granddaughter of John Colton, holds John Colton's Commission to the Union Army (*Photo by Marvin Jensen*).



Home Again

John Colton returned home to Galesburg in July of 1863. After recovering from his Civil war illness he quickly went back to work for his father at the store; continuing to work until his father's retirement in 1866. It was at that time, that John opened his own store in a new building and named it "John B. Colton."

On December 1, 1868, Colton married Mary A. Thomas. They had three children, John B., Jr., Chauncey and Edward T.

Colton became involved with other business activities in Galesburg. He was on the first Board of Directors of the Farmers & Mechanics Bank of Galesburg, he was a stockholder in the Union Hotel of Galesburg, and he continued on the Board of Directors of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad.

Around 1887, Colton moved to Kansas City where he owned the Kansas City Loan Company. He had a home there for 24 years but always considered Galesburg his true home. His wife and sons remained in Galesburg except for summer visits to their ranch in Nebraska.

Union Hotel and Farmers & Mechanics Bank, 1875 *(Courtesy Galesburg Library).*

John B. Colton Store circa 1870 *(Courtesy Galesburg Library).*

OFFICE OF

JOHN B. COLTON,

No. 1, Cor. Main St. and Public Square,

GALESBURG, - - ILLINOIS.

[ESTABLISHED IN 1837.]

I would respectfully call your attention to my stock of **Dry Goods** just opened, which, for variety and style, cannot be excelled in the West.

DRESS GOODS.

Fine French and English Merinos, Empress Cloths, Pekin Cord, Alpacas, P. de Chevres, Poplins, Worsted Plaids, Cashmeres and Delaines, Ladies' Cloths, &c., &c.

Also, a large stock of Ladies Cloaks, Chinchilla and Waterproof Cloakings, fine Double and Single and Breakfast Shawls, Nubias, Hoods, &c.

STANDARD PRINTS,

Flannels, fine Brown, Bleached and Heavy Standard Sheeting of all widths. Hosiery, Gloves, Hoop and Balmoral Skirts and Fancy Goods. Boots and Shoes for Men's Ladies' and Childrens' wear.

READY-MADE CLOTHING, FURNISHING GOODS, &C.

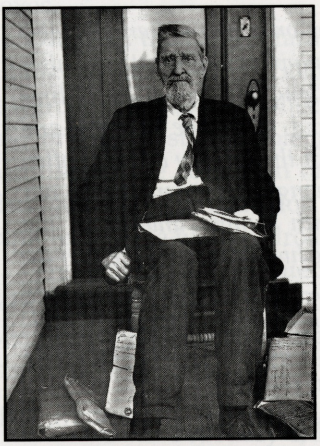
I am selling these goods LOWER than any other House in the City, and you will find it to your advantage to examine my stock.

Very Respectfully,

JOHN B. COLTON.

Advertisement circa 1870 (*Courtesy Knox College Library*)

Jayhawker Reunions



John Colton reads letters from fellow Jayhawkers at the home of L. Dow Stephens. Reunion, February 4, 1918, San Jose, CA.
(Courtesy Rita Colton)

John Colton developed strong ties with the Jayhawkers who, in 1849, had accompanied him across the "Great American Desert." Sometime in the early 1870s, Colton had the idea to plan a reunion and set forth to locate as many of his comrades as possible. Although it was difficult to locate people during that time period, Colton persevered and eventually found the majority of the Jayhawkers.

The first Jayhawker reunion was held on February 4, 1872 at Colton's home in Galesburg. February 4th was chosen because that was the date in 1850 that the group had reached civilization at Rancho San Francisquito. Each year Colton, or another Jayhawker, hosted the reunion. Every year the invitation was nearly the same. A typical invitation from 1905 follows:

Dear Comrade:

> *February 4, 1905, is coming in to view much more rapidly than in the year 1850, when without its knowledge our lost party was within a short distance from the Pacific coast, but our five or six miles daily march approached very slowly the Rancho San Francisquito and the end of our desperate trails. We will commemorate that event this year at the home of Charles Mecum, Mount Vernon, Iowa. Our remaining few being widely apart, if you are prevented from coming write a longer letter than ever before for those present to enjoy.*
>
> *Fraternally, John B. Colton*

During each reunion, Colton would read all of the letters he received from those Jayhawkers who could not attend. Besides Galesburg, reunions were held at: Thermopolis, Wyoming; San Jose, Santa Cruz, Laytonville and Lodi, California; Baker, Oregon; Kansas City, Missouri; Mt. Vernon, Iowa; and Colton's ranch near Eddyville, Nebraska.

It is worth relating a few words from two reunion letters to give the reader an idea of the comradeship the Jayhawkers developed as they crossed the unknown desert.

The first is from Edward Doty, former captain of the Jayhawker wagons, to John Colton written on January 28, 1890 from Santa Barbara, California:

" I saw L. D. Stephens and Tom Shannon on a visit at San Jose, also Mr. Manly, one of the men that came in for supplies and went back after the Arcan and Bennett families and we had a long talk about our old time hardships. I wish I could be with you and share the dangers and sufferings and hardships in out meandering in that dreary desert, I often think of the good feelings that existed amongst the men in all our hardships and trouble, weak and many with hunger and thirst not knowing whose turn it would be next to leave his bones to whiten on the sandy desert. Yet there was no grumbling, no growling, no blaming anyone for leading them into their trouble. But like brothers, would do all he could to help his fellow sufferer a long, I do think that there never was a better hearted set of men that crossed the plains."

The second is from L. Dow Stephens written on January 18, 1912 from San Jose, California:

L. Dow Stephens
(Courtesy San Jose City Library)

"Looking back 63 years ago seems to me like a dream more than reality. It don't seems possible that mortal man could have endured the struggle that we endured during the long weary travel over the 'Great American Desert,' and survived the great ordeal of suffering that befell us in our effort to reach the land of gold. It was a struggle for life sure enough and now there are four of us left to commemorate the long ago past. The present day generation never can experience the suffering and hardship we went through. There is no place for it. The desert has become the blossoming of the rose and every man that strikes it now knows where the next watering place is located. Desert travel is easy now."

Many Jayhawkers were not able to attend the annual reunions because of the long distance and time required to travel. Colton made certain that a reunion was held every year and that each surviving Jayhawker was notified. Some of the reunions had only the host and Colton plus a few local guests. This did not deter Colton from continuing the reunions because the one thing they did do was keep the story of Death Valley, the Jayhawkers, and other members of the Death Valley Wagon Train in the news for more than 50 years. He made certain there was news coverage. Colton saved every newspaper, maga-

zine article and letter that had to do with the Jayhawkers and the Death Valley Wagon Train and put them in large scrap books and manuscript boxes.

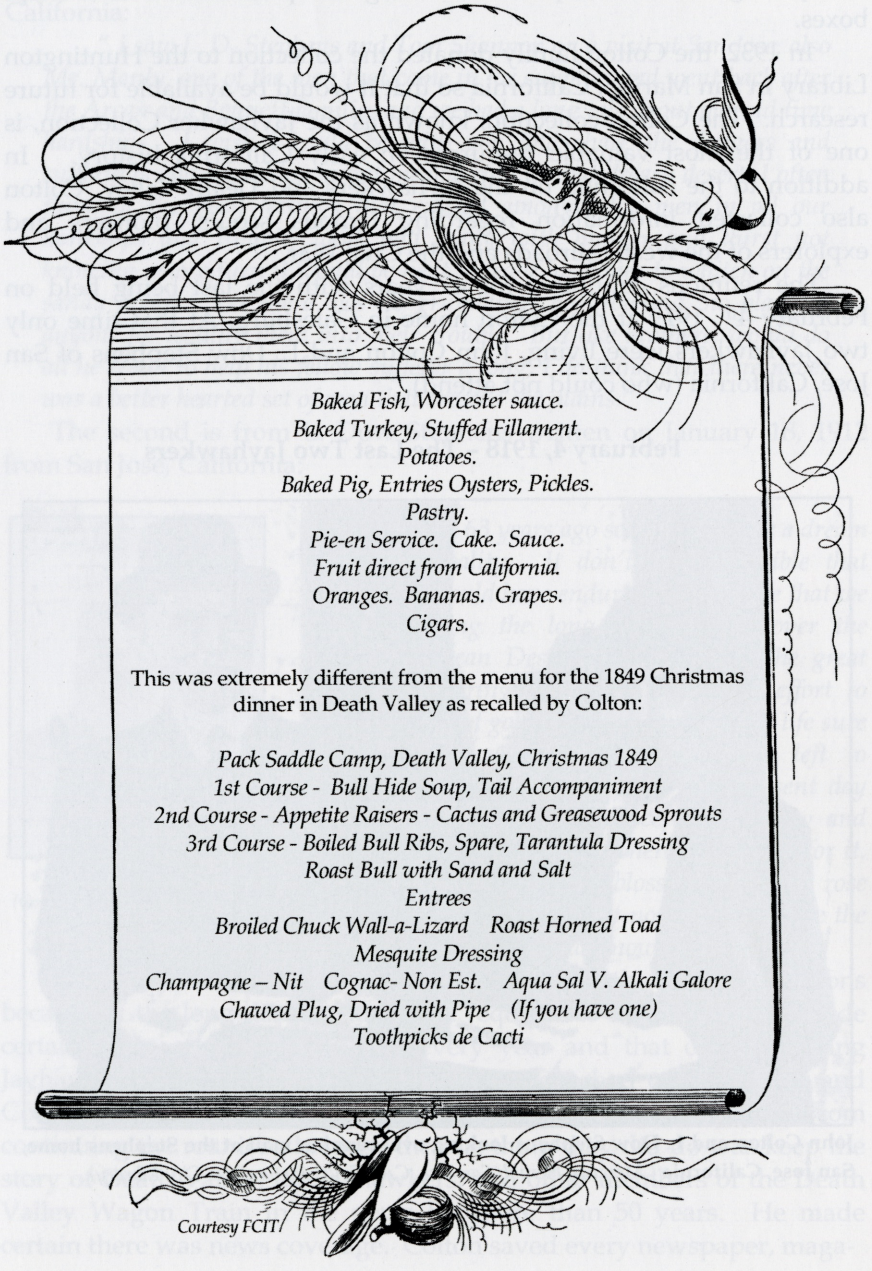
In 1932, the Colton family donated the collection to the Huntington Library in San Marino, California so that it would be available for future research. The Colton collection, known as the Jayhawker Collection, is one of the most valuable resources on early California history. In addition to the collection on the Jayhawkers and Death Valley, Colton also collected information regarding famous scouts, pioneers and explorers of the west, railroads and the Civil War.

The reunions continued for 47 years with the last being held on February 4th, 1919 at the Colton home in Galesburg. At that time only two Jayhawkers were living, John Colton and L. Dow Stephens of San Jose, California (who could not attend).

February 4, 1918 – The Last Two Jayhawkers

John Colton and L. Dow Stephens looking over reunion mail at the Stephens home, San Jose, California *(Mercury Herald, San Jose, CA., Courtesy San Jose City Library).*

The reunion dinners were usually elaborate and the following is the menu from the reunion at Colton's Nebraska ranch in 1906:



Baked Fish, Worcester sauce.
Baked Turkey, Stuffed Fillament.
Potatoes.
Baked Pig, Entries Oysters, Pickles.
Pastry.
Pie-en Service. Cake. Sauce.
Fruit direct from California.
Oranges. Bananas. Grapes.
Cigars.

This was extremely different from the menu for the 1849 Christmas dinner in Death Valley as recalled by Colton:

Pack Saddle Camp, Death Valley, Christmas 1849
1st Course - Bull Hide Soup, Tail Accompaniment
2nd Course - Appetite Raisers - Cactus and Greasewood Sprouts
3rd Course - Boiled Bull Ribs, Spare, Tarantula Dressing
Roast Bull with Sand and Salt
Entrees
Broiled Chuck Wall-a-Lizard Roast Horned Toad
Mesquite Dressing
Champagne – Nit Cognac- Non Est. Aqua Sal V. Alkali Galore
Chawed Plug, Dried with Pipe (If you have one)
Toothpicks de Cacti

Courtesy FCIT

Buzzard Roost Ranch
Eddyville, Nebraska

In 1884, John Colton began acquiring ranch land near the community of Eddyville, Dawson County, Nebraska. Eddyville is near the center of the state, 22 miles north of the Platte River. In 1893, he purchased 3,680 acres for $19,000. By the end of 1894, he had acquired 5,000 acres. He named the ranch "Buzzard Roost," because the land contained a canyon the locals called "Buzzard Roost Canyon". Colton made several improvements including building a ranch house, a bunkhouse for the cowboys and corrals for the horses.

Colton was not at the ranch all of the time but frequently traveled between the ranch and his homes in Galesburg and Kansas City. At various times Colton owned several thousand head of cattle; his favorite were Black Polled Angus and his brand was the number "306".

Cattle rustling was a problem in the area. In 1917, the Eddyville *Enterprise* newspaper ran an article offering $250.00 for testimony that led to the conviction of anyone caught stealing livestock from several ranches, including Colton's. While at the ranch, Colton usually carried a gun, a common practice in those days. In some areas, a gun was the only form of local law. With cattle rustlers around, carrying a gun while on the ranch didn't seem like a bad idea after all.

Colton was a very good storyteller, especially when it came to stories about Death Valley, but he talked very little about himself. Glimpses into Colton's personality can best be seen through the writings of employees and business acquaintances.

Mrs. Herman Martin, who was married to the ranch foreman and was a cook on the Colton ranch for twenty years, said of Colton:

> *"He never cheated anyone out of a dime but he would spend a thousand dollars to get back fifteen dollars if someone had beat him out of it. He didn't pay very good but we always had good things to eat."*

B.R. Hedglin, a former Eddyville banker, provided another first hand account which comes from the Dawson County Herald dated December 22, 1949:

> *"Forty-five years ago I met and became well acquainted with John B. Colton. The Buzzard Roost ranch was incorporated for $65,000.00 and Mr. Colton held all stock except $5,000.00. When it came time for the stockholders meetings at the ranch he would obtain proxies from stockholders in Galesburg and I would have one of the proxies with authority to vote. Other proxies were given to other local men. After*

business was transacted Mr. Colton provided a banquet for us. I had many pleasant times with Mr. Colton."

Another interesting and vivid account comes from Valma Mattson of Eddyville:

"In 1938 I bought the quarter of land on which the old headquarters buildings for the Buzzard Roost Ranch are situated. Tales of rustling, outlaws, and shooting scrapes add a colorful note to the history of this old ranch. I grew up listening to these tales, so to purchase the buildings give me a thrill.

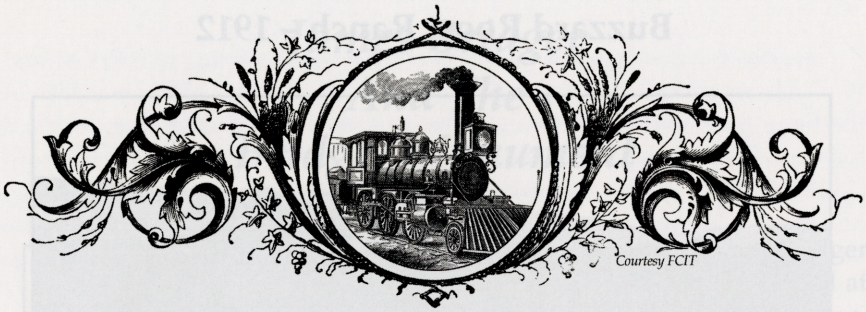
There are four rooms and a large pantry in the house. To the southeast was another room fastened to the house but entirely separate which was the office and private quarters for Mr. Colton. The house had been used for housing and feeding the cowboys. The upper floor was the bunkhouse. Entrance was gained by an outside stairway. The foundation was made of large blocks of wood. The nails used in construction of it are the old square head iron nails. The woodwork was badly scarred by spurs and had many carved initials. There were numerous bullet marks in the walls and ceiling of the upstairs. I imagine every cowboy who worked at the ranch left his mark in the woodwork of the walls.

Unfortunately, today nothing remains of this building.

There are many stories regarding Colton and his Buzzard Roost Ranch and three of the more interesting accounts from "Eddyville, Our Town" compiled by Dolores McFarland follow:

Don't Call It Rugby

The Union Pacific Railroad, which ran nearby the ranch, built a siding to the ranch to expedite the shipping of cattle. The Union Pacific put up a sign naming the siding "Rugby." The name infuriated Colton, as according to accounts, he did not like anything British, and he had his cowboys tear it down. In a few days, Union Pacific restored the signboard with the same name. Colton ordered his men to tear it down a second time while he rode into the Eddyville depot. There he instructed the station manager to notify the Union Pacific headquarters in Omaha, that if the name of the siding was not changed forthwith, he would drive his cattle northward to the Burlington Route for shipment thereafter. A new sign was in place within a few days with the name "Buzzard Roost" proudly emblazoned thereon.



Stop The Train - I Want To Get On

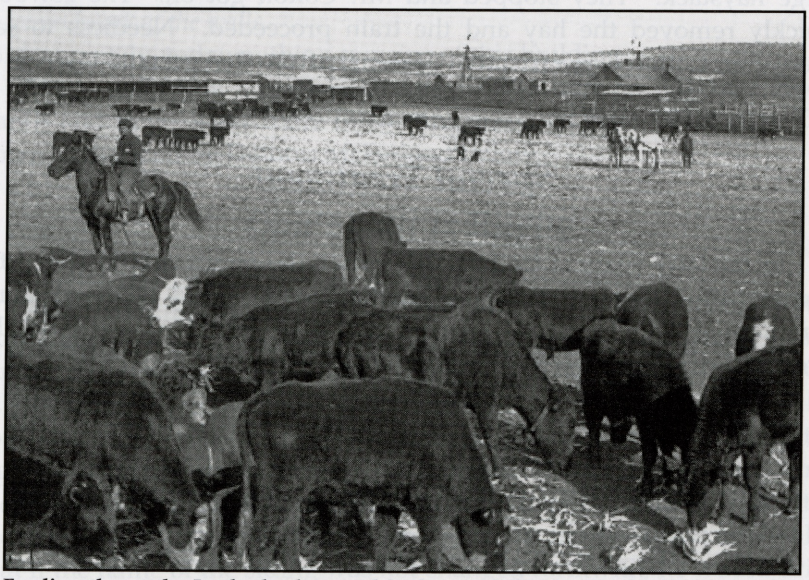
The following account is also indicative of Colton's character. The railroad was about one half mile from the house. He walked down the tracks one morning and attempted to stop the train for a mile and a half ride into Eddyville. Either the train crew did not see him or deliberately did not stop. They left him standing there shaking his fist. The next morning the train crew found their way blocked at the same place by a large haystack. They stopped and Mr. Colton got on. The cowboys quickly removed the hay and the train proceeded. Needless to say, thereafter, Colton was a frequent passenger from that point to town.

Special Treatment

In the later years of Colton's life, when the family would spend the summer-time at the ranch, the Union Pacific would sidetrack some Pullman cars and a dining car for their use. The Union Pacific also provided cooks, porters and waiters.

Buzzard Roost Ranch – 1912

Rounding up the cattle for a photo opportunity.



Feeding the cattle. In the background is the ranch headquarters. The two story building is the bunkhouse *(Photos Courtesy of the © Nebraska State History Society).*

James Bridger And The Bridger Monument

James Bridger
© Kansas City Library

John Colton first met James Bridger in 1849 when the Jayhawkers stopped at Fort Bridger in Southwestern Wyoming. Bridger had headed a number of expeditions into the mountains and had attained a position of great prominence in the west. He founded Fort Bridger which became a trading post known throughout the west. When the Jayhawkers arrived in 1849, they stayed at Fort Bridger a few days resting and refreshing themselves before heading on to Great Salt Lake City.

While at Fort Bridger, Colton and Bridger became friends. Colton had brought a book along with him that contained an account of one of Bridger's exploits. Upon meeting Bridger, Colton handed him the book open to that particular page. Bridger shadowed his eyes and looked at the book a few moments. He handed the book back to Colton and told him the sun was in his eyes and asked Colton to read it to him. Actually Bridger could not read or write.

When the Jayhawkers left Fort Bridger, Colton made Bridger promise to come to Salt Lake City, which Bridger did. He spent time with the Jayhawkers and accompanied them to dances held by Brigham Young. Young held dances because he enjoyed the company of ladies and dancing. Bridger and Young were apparently not fond of each other and of this situation Colton states:

> *"While I was in Salt Lake, Bridger showed us he was a bigger man than Brigham Young. Young got jealous of Bridger and sent word that he intended to wipe him off the face of the earth. Jim sent back word that if he heard any more racket out of Brigham he'd wipe him out. We had a good time with Bridger. We had some of the first whiskey that went into Salt Lake and that's a good little side story."*

In 1903, Colton attended the dedication of the monument to General W. T. Sherman in Washington D.C. General Grenville Dodge was also at the dedication. Dodge was a general in the Civil War and later worked for the Union Pacific Railroad. At the dedication General Dodge told Colton that it was his desire to erect a monument to James Bridger who had died in 1881. General Dodge gave Colton the tasks of finding where Bridger was buried and of designing the monument. They decided the monument should be erected in Mt. Washington Cemetery, in the Westport District of Kansas City, Missouri. Bridger had lived in Kansas City and maintained a store in the Westport District for a number of years. General Dodge told Colton that he would pay for the monument.

General Dodge knew Bridger when Dodge was the chief engineer in charge of constructing the westward expansion of the Union Pacific Railroad. Dodge was responsible for finding a route through the mountains over which a railroad could be built. For a while, it seemed that the task would fail. Then Dodge learned about the mountain man, Jim Bridger, who knew all about the mountains and passes. Dodge quickly summoned Bridger who agreed to help. Bridger found a route and remained with Dodge for considerable time assisting with the final work.

Upon returning from the General Sherman monument dedication, Colton set about trying to find the location of Bridger's remains. He located the remains on the old farm Bridger had owned near the small town of Dallas, Missouri, just south of Kansas City. The grave was covered with weeds and brush and the original marker broken. Colton exhumed the remains himself and brought them to Mt. Washington Cemetery. He then set about having a monument constructed with the proper inscription.

On December 10, 1904, the Bridger Monument was dedicated. General Dodge planned to attend and give the address but was ill and could not make the trip west from his home in New York. However, he did send a representative. John Colton gave these introductory remarks:

> *"My Friends: We have assembled here to-day to unveil a monument to preserve the memory of the acts performed in life by James Bridger, whose knowledge of the vast territory west of the Missouri River through which he had roamed commencing in he year 1822, had fitted him to guide, exploring and military expeditions that brought to public knowledge that great empire with its mineral wealth and natural advantages for the new settlements since located within its borders.*

Nearly fifty-six years ago I, with my companions ferried our animals and wagons across the Missouri River to a point on the west side where the city of Omaha now stands. When we landed the only inhabitants we met were a few Indians of the Omaha and Otoe tribes, with their squaws and papooses. At this date the great territory west of the Missouri River was marked upon the maps as the "Great American Desert." The eastern borderline being the river.

We were voyagers to the newly discovered gold mines on the Pacific slope. At Fort Bridger we camped for a week to recuperate our animals, and here for the first time I met Jim Bridger, and a great friendship sprung up between us and all my time was spent at the fort. At our departure I made him promise to meet me again in Salt Lake, which he did and remained a week.

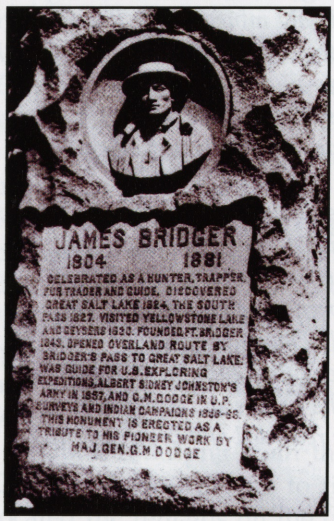
Bridger was the king of the mountaineers, trappers and guides. It was born in him and he maintained that position and reputation until the influx of civilization eliminated the Indian and the buffalo forced him from that life. The monument has been erected here in this beautiful cemetery by Major General Grenville Dodge as a public mark of his appreciation of the great services rendered him by Bridger. General Dodge was a conspicuous figure in the Civil war, especially in the army of Tennessee. His acts and deeds are recorded and preserved in the history of that period.

At the close of the war General Dodge was selected by the authorities to locate the route of the great Union Pacific railway. As chief engineer he was given full power to locate the line through the great wilderness. How well he succeeded the world knows. It was at that trying time, when he had successfully located the line to the base of the Rocky Mountain Range and great and new difficulties were presented that Bridger's name and mountain knowledge were made known to him, and he immediately sent for him, and for a longtime after Bridger was his assistant and advisor in the selection of the line through the mountain range and then the Union Pacific railway was an accomplished fact. The final success was to the credit of General Dodge and the great assistance rendered by Bridger he places this monument to preserve that recognition for all time.

Immediately upon the commencement of the building of the Union Pacific immigration poured in from the east of the Missouri River and the building of the vast empire commenced which to-day is possessed of such wonderful wealth and improvements and which in the near future will surpass in wealth and prominence the wildest dreams and predictions of its first discoverers and builders.

I regret that sickness prevents the presence of General Dodge, as he

had intended to address you in person, but the address that he had prepared for this occasion will be delivered by his representative, Mr. W. N. Jones of New York City, whom I now have the pleasure of introducing to you."


JAMES BRIDGER
1804 1881
CELEBRATED AS A HUNTER, TRAPPER, FUR TRADER AND GUIDE. DISCOVERED GREAT SALT LAKE 1824. THE SOUTH PASS 1827. VISITED YELLOWSTONE LAKE AND GEYSERS 1830. FOUNDED FT. BRIDGER 1843. OPENED OVERLAND ROUTE BY BRIDGER'S PASS TO GREAT SALT LAKE. WAS GUIDE FOR U.S. EXPLORING EXPEDITIONS, ALBERT SIDNEY JOHNSTON'S ARMY IN 1857, AND G.M. DODGE IN U.P. SURVEYS AND INDIAN CAMPAIGNS 1865-66. THIS MONUMENT IS ERECTED AS A TRIBUTE TO HIS PIONEER WORK BY MAJ. GEN. G.M. DODGE

Bridger Monument

© Kansas City Monument

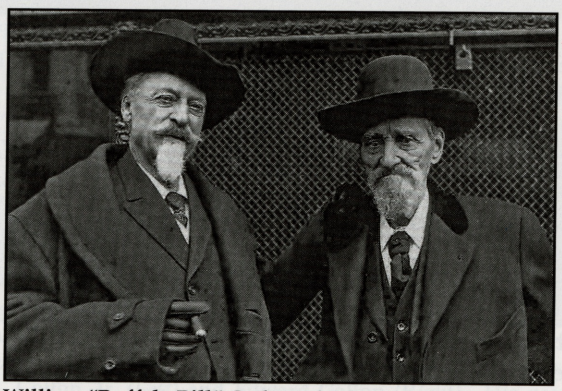
Celebrated as a hunter, trapper, fur trader, and guide. Discovered the Great Salt Lake, 1824. The South Pass, 1827. Visited Yellowstone Lake and Geysers, 1830. Founded Fort Bridger 1843. Opened Overland Route by Bridger's Pass to Great Salt Lake. Was guide for United States Army exploring expeditions in 1857 and Gen. Grenville Dodge in Union Pacific surveys and Indian campaigns 1865-66.

William "Buffalo Bill" Cody

One of Colton's very good friends was Buffalo Bill Cody. Based on correspondence in the Jayhawker Collection in the Huntington Library, they probably met sometime in the late 1880's. There is no doubt that they enjoyed each other's company as evidenced in letters written to Colton by Buffalo Bill. Whenever their paths crossed, they would share a glass of whiskey and spend many hours talking of their experiences in the development of the American West. Sometimes they would get together at Buzzard Roost Ranch. Conveniently, Cody had a ranch about forty miles south near North Platte. Today the Cody ranch is a Nebraska State Park. Most people remember Buffalo Bill from his Wild West Show. Prior to that, he was one of the youngest Pony Express riders and a frontiersman. Each year Colton would invite him to the Jayhawker reunion.

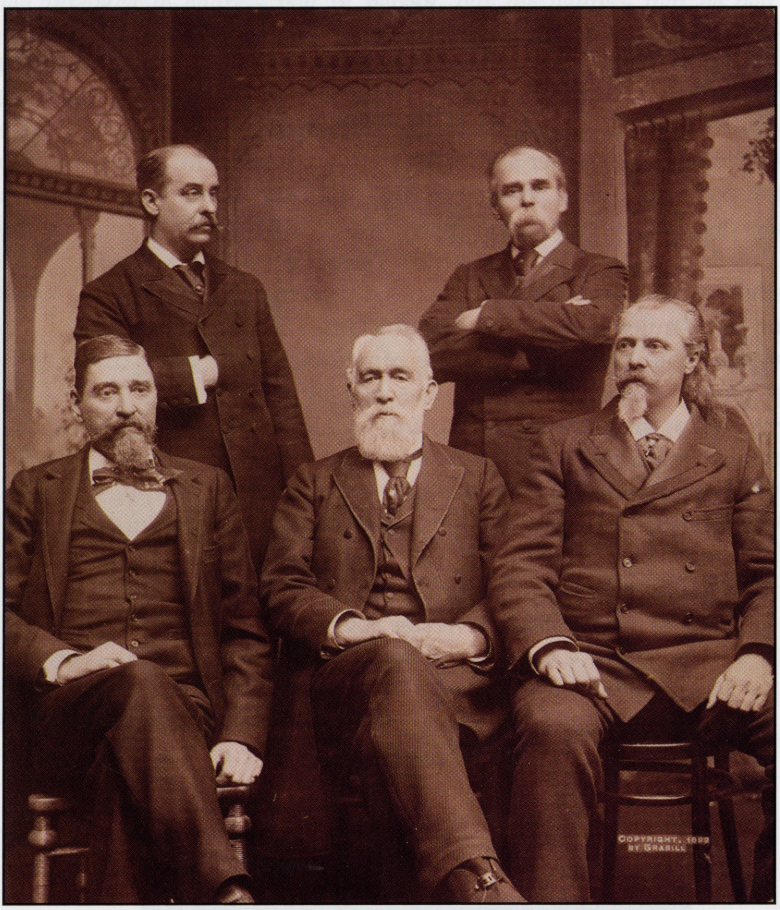
On June 30, 1915, Cody wrote to Colton from Columbus, Nebraska. He was appearing with the combined Sells-Floto Circus and the Buffalo Bill Original Wild West Show. The following is an excerpt from a letter found in the Jayhawker collection that illustrates their friendship:

> *"I was much pleased to receive your letter of June 15. I had hopes of finding you in California but you are too speedy for me. Bringing the show to your town in August and hope to find you. Am sending you a route card and if you can come to see me, we can spend a few days together. The citizens of North Platte gave me a great reception and they are laying for me here. John, write me again and let's keep in touch while we live in civilization."*
>
> *God Bless You, W. Cody*



William "Buffalo Bill" Cody and John Colton, Denver Colorado, 1912 *(Courtesy Rita Colton).*

Important Men of the West



From left to right: Standing: Robert "Pony Bob" Haslam and Prentiss Ingraham. Seated: John B. Colton, Alexander Majors, and William "Buffalo Bill" Cody. © *Huntington Library*

"Pony Bob" Haslam was one of the fastest riders for the Pony Express and is credited with both the fastest ride and the longest ride. **Prentiss Ingrahm** was an author and wrote weekly fictional "Dime Store" novels about Buffalo Bill. For a time he also served as his manager. **John B. Colton** is the subject of this keepsake. **Alexander Majors** was one of the founders of the Pony Express. He and his partners owned one of the largest freight businesses in the United States. **"Buffalo Bill" Cody's** fame is covered in many books including his life as a frontiersman, Pony Express rider and entertainer with his Wild West Shows.

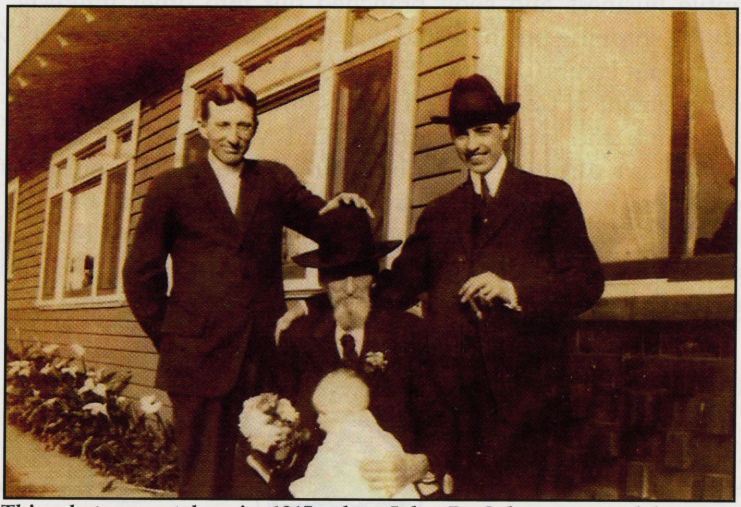
Colton Succumbs To Injuries

Around the first of September 1919, Colton left Galesburg for Buzzard Roost Ranch to attend to some business matters. Having completed that business he began his journey home by train on October 16, 1919. As the train approached Grand Rapids, Iowa it stopped. It is thought that Colton may have arisen from his seat when the train started again. He was thrown so violently against the seat that he fractured his right hip. After the train reached Grand Rapids he was taken to the hospital where he remained unconscious for two days.

For some reason, his family was not notified immediately. After finally getting the news, his sons Chauncey and Edward rushed to Grand Rapids while son John Jr. arrived later. On account of her poor health, Colton's wife Mary remained in Galesburg.

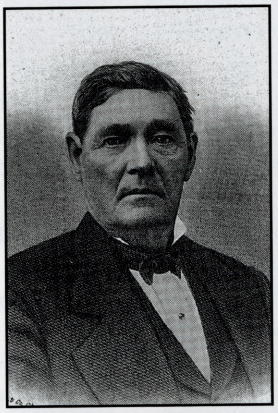
After his sons arrived, Colton seemed to be revived but pneumonia set in and he passed away on October 23, 1919 at the age of 88. Shortly thereafter, Mary Colton and some of the family moved to Norwalk, California where Colton had purchased property many years before. Colton's death left only one Jayhawker remaining; L. Dow Stephens of San Jose, California.

Three Generations of Colton's



This photo was taken in 1915 when John B. Colton returned home to Galesburg from California. John B. Colton, Sr. *(Center)* poses with sons John B. Colton, Jr. *(Left)* and Edward Colton *(Right).* His new grandson John B. Colton III *(Center)* will eventually become the father of Rita Colton who provided this picture.

Conclusion
The Colton Family

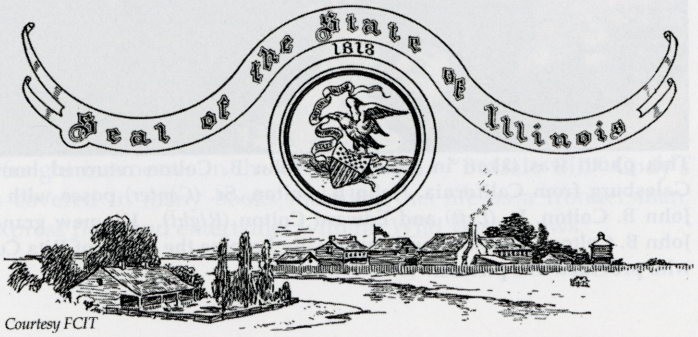


Chauncey Colton
© Galesburg Library

No story of John Colton would be complete without mentioning a few words about his father Chauncey and his brother Francis. All three men led lives that were instrumental in the growth of the American West; the father, Chauncey, had a great influence on the development of the character and integrity of both of his sons.

Chauncey Colton was a native of Springfield, Pennsylvania born on September 21, 1800. On January 5, 1826 he married Emily McLanathan. During their marriage they had five children, Harriet, Sarah, John, and Francis, a fifth died in infancy. In 1836 Chauncey decided to try to make his fortune in the Great West.

In June of 1836 he was one of the first settlers in the area that was to become the city of Galesburg, Illinois. He was very successful in his mercantile business and soon branched out into other interests. He entered the shipping business and was the first to ship beef, pork, wheat and corn from central Illinois. He favored every enterprise that led to the advancement of Galesburg. He was one of the founders of the First National Bank and later the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank, and for a time served as a director. He built the first school in Galesburg, was one of the owners in the Union Hotel and helped complete the Old First Church. To many, his greatest accomplishment was bringing the railroad to Galesburg. He is considered the father of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad now known as Burlington Santa Fe.



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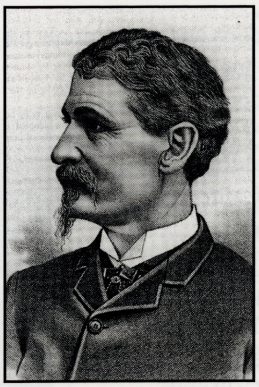

Francis Colton
© Galesburg Library

John Colton's brother, Francis, was himself a remarkable man. Francis was born in Monson, Massachusetts on May 22, 1834. He received his schooling in Galesburg and was a graduate of the local Knox College. Upon graduation, at 21, he worked in his father's store until 1864 when he was appointed vice-president of the First National Bank. In 1866 he was appointed to be the United States Consul to Venice, a post he held for four years. Upon his return home, he was appointed the General Passenger Agent of the Union Pacific Railroad. He represented them, and the Central Pacific Railroad, throughout China, Japan, India and eventually London, England. Originally it was necessary to buy a new ticket whenever a passenger changed railroad companies. To alleviate this inconvenience to the customers Francis developed the continuous railroad ticket. He also wrote a book about around-the-world travel. To him is due the honor of introducing "round the world" ticketing. People could now come to the United States by ship, travel across the country by train to another ship, and then continue on to the Orient. This method reduced the travel time by several weeks.

It is impossible to place a specific value upon the labors of the Hon. Francis Colton because his contributions to the developing railroad and shipping industries are still in effect today. Moreover, in the consular service of his country his work reflected honor upon the country he represented.

In 1872, he returned to Galesburg and became the president of the Farmers' and Mechanics' bank. During that time he was one of those who convinced the Santa Fe Railroad to come to Galesburg. Francis retired and stepped down as bank president in 1884 at age 50. He then moved his family to Washington, D. C. where he managed his large multi-state land holdings and became a prominent figure in political circles.

Francis was married twice. His first wife, Frances Carey, accompanied him to Venice and died there in June of 1869. Francis had two sons by this marriage. The eldest, Albion, died at age one in 1860. Of particular interest is that the other son, George, became the Governor of Puerto Rico in 1908. Francis married again in 1875 to Annie Snively. They had three daughters.

In the early development of the American West and central Illinois, few families were more influential than the Colton's.

Acknowledgements

A special thanks to the following libraries, organizations and individuals for providing information and pictures for this Death Valley '49er, Inc. publication:

Huntington Library, San Marino, California
California State Library, Sacramento, California
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John Petersen, Pacific Grove, California

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The Jayhawker Collection

A special thanks goes to the Huntington Library for housing John Colton's lifetime collection of material dealing with the Jayhawkers of Death Valley and Western history. The collection came by way of the Colton family and is now cared for at the Huntington Library so that future researchers can access this valuable information.

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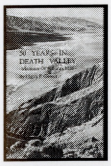
Death Valley '49ers Organization Statement of Purpose

Death Valley '49ers, Inc. is a nonprofit, volunteer organization whose mission is to promote understanding and appreciation of Death Valley and its history. Its only source of funding is through memberships and donations. It holds an annual encampment in November in Death Valley for members to learn about, celebrate, and enjoy the Death Valley area, and it provides scholarships to deserving high school graduates from the area to further their education. The '49ers work in cooperation with the National Park Service. Annual membership is open to all, and a yearly Keepsake is provided for each membership in keeping with our mission. Please visit our website at www.deathvalley49ers.org or write P.O. Box 338, Death Valley, CA 92328.

The Death Valley '49ers

Books



50 Years In Death Valley, Memoirs of a Borax Man by Harry P. Gower
Death Valley '49ers publication # 09 **164 pages in Soft Cover**

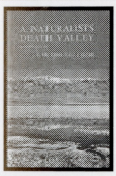
"A collection of reminiscence and anecdotes of the Death Valley area between 1909 and 1960. Mr. H. P. (Harry) Gower was not only a resident but had a major influence on the course of events in the region during those years." - *Dean Lemon, Life Director, The Death Valley '49ers*

"Harry P. Gower was not just a spectator but often a prime mover in events in Death Valley. Surveying for railroads, routing claim jumpers, and managing a pioneer resort hotel."
- L. Burr Belden, Past President, The Death Valley '49ers

The Lost Death Valley '49er Journal of Louis Nusbaumer by George Koenig
Death Valley '49ers publication # 11 **84 pages in Soft Cover**

Louis Nusbaumer (1819-1878), was a German immigrant that left New York City in March, 1849, traveled to Independence, Mo., and there began his trip overland with William Lewis Manly and John Rogers to California.

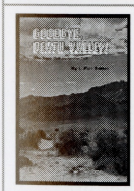
This is the story of his journey, which was kept in two small notebooks, recovered in 1966, illustrated throughout with drawings, photos and maps. Made available here by the Death Valley '49ers Organization.



A Naturalist's Death Valley by Dr. Edmund C. Jaeger
Death Valley '49ers publication # 05 **76 pages in Soft Cover**

A Naturalist's Death Valley is a primer to help the thousands of admiring visitors to Death Valley National Park get a general picture of wild flowers, trees, shrubs, reptiles, birds, insects, mammals, fossils and Native Americans.

Dr. Edmund C. Jaeger was a nationally known naturalist who authored many books on the flora & fauna of California.

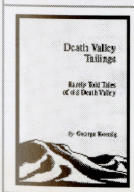


Goodbye, Death Valley! The Tragic 1849 Jayhawker Trek by L. Burr Belden
Death Valley '49ers publication # 04 **68 pages in Soft Cover**

This work traces the largest of several parties who became mired in Death Valley during December 1849. Two members of this party, Jayhawkers, kept diaries of their trip which have been preserved.

They were consulted by the author along with a scrapbook and numerous letters kept by the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

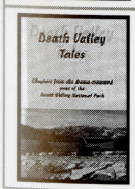
This work also includes a list of Jayhawkers.



Death Valley Tailings Rarely Told Tales of old Death Valley by George Koenig
Death Valley '49ers publication # 13 **132 pages in Soft Cover & 144 pages First Edition Hard Cover**

Recaptured within these pages are stories that will help you to turn back the clock, and relive the historic past. This is a definitely different collection of Death Valley tales. Each provides a more complete picture of one of the most fascinating areas and eras of the Old West.

Subjects discussed include missing 1849 Death Valley Argonauts, gold and silver hunters, explores, map makers, and inscriptions left on rock.



Death Valley Tales, chapters from the drama-crammed past of the Death Valley National Park by Ten Western Authors
Death Valley '49ers publication # 03 **74 pages in Soft Cover**

This publication has been in print since 1955, but in this newly updated edition all the stories are true.

Mrs. Juliette Brier's account of her trek through the desert in 1849-50 and Russ Journigan's remembrances from the 1930s and 1940s are a wonderful addition, along with John Rogers Death Valley's Unsung Hero in 1849.

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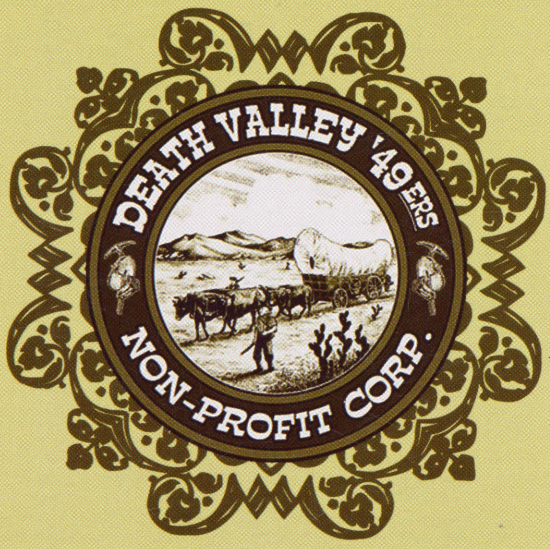
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